



St. Moritz / Davos - Zermatt

**Complete makeover for 1st and 2nd class in the Glacier Express.**

## **New anniversary look for the Glacier Express**

**The first completely renovated 1st and 2nd class cars of the Glacier Express are set to roll out just in time for next year's 90th anniversary celebrations. The design and technology of the cars are based on the Excellence Class, which has proved hugely popular since its launch in March 2019.**

After more than a decade in service, the current fleet of panoramic cars were due a complete makeover. A task that was undertaken together with the repositioning of the Glacier Express and the associated establishment of Glacier Express AG. All the stops were pulled out for the refit in terms of design and technology with the conversion of two cars in the new Excellence Class, which have been running successfully since March 2019. Over the last few months, the first two 1st class Api cars and three 2nd class Bp cars have undergone a total refit under the guidance of a team of project managers in rolling stock engineering at Rhaetian Railway in Landquart and the Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn in Brig-Glis – finishing just in time for the start of the new timetable on 15 December 2019.

### **State-of-the-art design and technology add to the experience.**

All of the panoramic cars (26 + 2 reserve cars) to be converted will be given a modern interior, the likes of which was created by NOSE Design Experience for the Excellence Class. The high-quality materials used are designed to create a sense of Swissness and Alpine chic, for a natural Alpine experience, running cleverly through all three comfort classes like a central theme.

Finer materials are generally used for the interior – light oak in 2nd class, dark walnut in 1st class. The current seats will be upholstered with the same fabrics as those in Excellence Class, combined with black leather elements in 2nd class and brown leather elements in 1st class.

The cars will be equipped with a modern customer information system with built-in infotainment that allows passengers to obtain additional video or audio information about the route on their tablet or smartphone and thus find out all about the many highlights along the way. Passengers will also be able to use this to give direct feedback about the journey and ultimately help improve the service. All-important information and tips will be available on two large screens at each end of the passenger compartment, too. Furthermore, all in-seat audio systems will be modernised and equipped with an extra two language channels.

Factors such as practical elements and comfort will also be taken into account during the refit: for example, sockets, cup indents and bottle holders will be next to every table; larger racks will allow more luggage to be stored; a new solid stone (quartzite from the Rhine valley) washbasin wall with integrated mirror cabinet will be fitted in the toilets. Sun protection film on the skylights will minimise heat radiation. The exterior paintwork is set to remain the same: the iconic branding with the Swiss cross over the entrances has long become a distinctive trademark.

### **Large panoramic windows and modernised galley/service cars**

The first of six galley/service cars are already being converted, too. Standing tables and lean-to surfaces are being replaced by a new counter. Kitchen appliances are being upgraded and more storage and shelf space is being created in the car. A major change is the installation of two panoramic windows that open at the touch of a button, creating even more opportunity for glare-free photographs and filming. This innovation is in response to the extensive feedback received from photo and film fans on board the Glacier Express. The first car is expected to go into service next spring.



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Two completely modernised Glacier Express compositions will be in operation by the 2020 summer season. The aim is to completely refit the Glacier Express fleet by the start of the 2021 summer season. The operating railways RhB and MGBahn are investing over CHF 20 million in the project, which will be covered by the annual costs of Glacier Express AG.



## Press release

### **Excellence Class sets new standards**

*Now in its 89th year of operation, the Glacier Express is launching a new premium product – Excellence Class – which gives the experience of travelling in the slowest express train in the world an upmarket makeover: lounge chairs provide superb comfort and a concierge caters to the needs of passengers.*

Back in 1930, the founding railway companies were already providing their best carriages for the journey between the Engadine and the Matterhorn. Since then, the Glacier Express has been offering one of the most popular scenic railway experiences in the world. “Nevertheless, the new challenges presented by digitalisation, fewer bookings through traditional channels and the abolition of the flat rate tax subsidy meant that we at the Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn (MGBahn) and Rhaetian Railway (RhB) had to give serious consideration to making the Glacier Express fit for the future,” says Isidor Baumann, chairman of Glacier Express AG. Founding the independent company in 2017 was the first step. Now Excellence Class is setting new standards in experience, service and quality.

### **Alpine motifs with premium design and materials**

In 2016, experts from the two railway companies joined forces with design specialists NOSE Design Experience to plan the project, which was realised at the RhB workshops in Landquart: heralding a new era for the Glacier Express, two existing panorama carriages were transformed into exclusive premium carriages in the space of a year and a half. First to catch your eye are the plush seats featuring a blend of beige leather and fine fabric in “glacial shades”. Moreover, by limiting the seating arrangement to two single rows, each passenger is guaranteed a window seat. A highly unusual showpiece is the oversized compass in the carriage’s on-board bar, which should keep passengers entertained in the spiral tunnels. The compass dome is gold-plated, as is the background of the illuminated lateral friezes featuring silhouette-like mountain landscapes. The Alpine style of the interior design is reflected in the bar and washstand counters through the use of quartzite from the Rhine Valley.

### **Liveried concierge reminiscent of wagon-lits**

Matching the luxurious interior is the refined service: a concierge ensures the well-being of up to 20 passengers – from the moment they board, to serving the meal and refreshments and pouring drinks at the bar. The concierge is also familiar with the highlights of the route, with the assistance of an on-board infotainment system, which passengers can access via personal tablets at their seat. Reminiscent of the style of the gilded wagon-lits years, the concierge’s livery hints at the revival of on-rail luxury between Zermatt and St. Moritz.



### **Exclusivity comes with a price tag**

The exquisite journey in Excellence Class attracts a supplement of CHF 420 over and above the regular price for a 1st class ticket. Included in the price are refinements such as the guaranteed window seat, a welcome aperitif, a five-course meal with wine accompaniment, tea time plus soft drinks, coffee and the exclusive, luxurious ambiance. The gastronomy makes a feature of local ingredients sourced from the regions through which the train passes. Although by Swiss standards Excellence Class represents a whole new league, it is pitched just right for the international premium market, as Helmut Biner, long-serving head of markets at MGBahn, knows only too well: "The supplement corresponds to an overnight stay in a good Alpine hotel – a valid comparison." Luxury tour operators, especially from Asia, are said to have already expressed strong interest. And Glacier Express Managing Director Annemarie Meyer is confident that Excellence Class not only has the potential to appeal to a new clientele, but also to garner fresh attention to the Glacier Express itself, resulting in a stronger brand presence: "This is a key factor in today's tourism environment, given that most travellers now go online for their information and book according to ratings and comments. Either way, we are confident that the Excellence Class offering and our refit programme for the other panorama coaches starting this year will help reposition the Glacier Express across all segments, including individual travellers, resulting in our again being able to welcome 230,000-plus passengers per annum on a regular basis."

**Travelling by rail through the Swiss Alps has never been so luxurious. The new Excellence Class offers passengers a five-star service and fabulous views courtesy of guaranteed window seats. The eight-hour journey between St. Moritz and Zermatt takes in 291 bridges and 91 tunnels. The two Excellence Class carriages run once a day in each direction from 2 March to 13 October 2019 and from 15 December 2019 to 11 October 2020. The Excellence Class experience requires a regular 1st class ticket as well as the supplement of CHF 420; the Swiss Federal Railways Half-Fare, GA and Swiss Travel Pass travelcards are valid. Reservations via [www.glacierexpress.ch](http://www.glacierexpress.ch) or at any railway station.**

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